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HUMAN AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF URBANIZATION IN ASIA: THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND URBANIZATION

[Item 3(a)]

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When migrating to the city a villager enters a new society. From a homogeneous - though by no means always friendly - society, he is faced with an incomprehensible heterogeneity. It is the sort of experience the European may have when coming for the first time to an Asian city, only far more baffling. For the Western, capitalistic aspects of an individualistic, money making society which the Euripean knows is the prevalent factor in the "dualistic" city, whereas the "Eastern", traditional aspect, although represented by a large majority of the inhabitants, is not very clearly visible, certainly not at first sight.

/The physical

The physical surroundings, the huge buildings, the crowded roads, the busy traffic, are astonishing. The tempo, the lack of personal interest, the money economy with its penny pinching attitudes, the incredible variety of goods in the shops - the majority of which he would not be able to nominate or to use - all this will make the villager ill at ease, if not afraid.

However, our villager knows somebody from his own village (this relationship is extremely important) who is living in this impossible place, and he goes there and clings to him. Indeed, in all the five studies prepared for UNESCO, we find this very important factor. In many cases the new-comer lives for months with his fellow villager, and perhaps longer, especially when the latter is a relative. We do not know very much about the process of acclimatization (as it might well be called), but gradually he knows a small sector of city life, his immediate surroundings, the place where he works, the people he meets every day. It will depend on his individual adaptive capacity how soon he will feel "at home", but there comes a time when he will meet another new-comer, and will realize how much he already knows as compared to the other man.

What has happened to him meanwhile? He has accustomed himself to a complete money economy; to a new kind of work; to working hours governed by the clock instead of by nature; even to the terror of night shifts; to a large number of impersonal human contacts; to different food and other meal hours; to continuous noise either of the factory, or of the traffic, or of the people living in the same crowded room. And to many more things. But most important, perhaps, is his total dependence on money which formerly played a minor role as he was living in largely a subsistence economy. This makes it of such a crucial importance to the migrant to find work, and it makes him realize the obvious sequence: no work - no money - no food. It may seem obvious, but for a very large number of village people, sheltered in the joint family, it is not. But it is certainly clear that the greatest anxiety of each migrant is to find work. This is the difference between the picture shown in the Delhi study and in the other reports which described migrants who had found work and income.

/The villager,

The villager, now accustomed to city life, may take regularly a cup of tea or a drink and have learned to smoke a cigarette instead of the traditional hookah[1] or kretèk[2] and to enjoy the cinema. But he will miss his family and the gossip of his village and his quiet work in the fields. And he is starting to build up an idealized village, that, for years to come, will probably be the image in his mind of a far from ideal place which he had to leave because of sheer poverty and distress.

If asked if he likes his new way of life, he will most probably emphatically deny it, pointing at the bad housing conditions and the unhealthy surroundings, adding however, that he cannot go back. Meanwhile, he may have spent a couple of years in the city and will certainly have visited his village at least once every year; if he left his family behind he will probably have found some place where to live - inferior, to be sure, to his old place, but enabling him at least to let his family join him. In fact, he has become a city dweller and will probably stay so. However, he still is convinced that he will go back to his village, next year or so, wherever he has saved enough money to buy some land. But his children are going to school, and the schools here are really better than back home, so he stays on. And then, his sons start earning and the family income grows to much that it would be a pity to go back just now. Most probably he will never go back, or, perhaps, when he has become too old to work in the factory and retires to his village to supervise the cultivation by a tenant of the small plot of land that he has been able to buy. But his children have become real city folks. And the returned migrant may become a spearhead of innovations in his village, as it was reported from Java particularly with respect to ex-service men.

This might be the picture of a successful migration as described in some of the five studies recently published by UNESCO. It is not the picture of the type of migrant described in the Delhi study, nor does it render the situation of the temporary migrant who comes to Bangkok for some months only.

/How far

1/ Waterpipe (Pakistan and North India).
2/ Cigarette wrapped in maize leaf (Java).

How far does the city affect the migrant's beliefs and habits? It is clear that his working habits have changed very much, his ideas of time is different now; he has learned to the quite novel distinction between "work" and "leisure"; he is accustomed to a rigid discipline of work although he may not like it; he wears different cloths, has acquainted himself with the use of a number of things which he did not know before, particularly food and beverages and Western medicine (although he will not forget his native talisman altogether), and he cannot help finding his village people rather old-fashioned and backward, a little coarse and ridiculous actually (but the village people laugh at his "refined" speech and manners); his way of thinking is "modern" now and he says that he is broad-minded as regards matters of caste or other social differentiations. Nevertheless, he will see to it that his daughter marries a young man of no inferior caste than his own. In fact, in many cases we may find that his professed attitudes and his actual behaviour do not quite coincide. Often he will have climbed a few ranks on the social ladder, and may rationalize his actually conservative beinviour from that angle.

From the Dacca and the Bangkok study it became clear that his religious duties were carried out faithfully, perhaps more so in the city than in the village. The social control in the village does not seem to be stronger as regards this matter, than that of the "Prayer Committees" operating in the Dacca factories. In Bangkok we find that the beautiful temples greatly appeal to the migrants and from Bombay it is reported that, although there may be a shift in the groups of practising and non-practising Hindus, the total number of those who follow religious practices has not decreased. In the Delhi study where a very unfavourable economic situation is described which prevents the larger part of the migrants to find a more or less permanent job, a direct correlation between economic distress, social disintegration and loss of religious practices came clearly out of the study. -- The author of the Djakarta study also had the impression that religion did not suffer.

/When the

When the migration succeeds it is found that new social connections are formed, thus replacing the organic links of the village community. This point is especially stressed in Mr Heeren's paper (URB/8) where he says that "social control in the city does not differ much from that in the rural ones". In general, his description of Djakarta city life gives the impression not of life in a city but in an agglomeration of villages, each with its own character, each also physically showing far more the village features than the city aspect. The kampongs in Djakarta with their trees and flowers are certainly more friendly places than the slums of Bombay or Calcutta although it cannot be denied that there are slums in Djakarta as well. However, the kampongs as described by Heeren do not form the heart of the city. That is the area of the Chinese shop keepers and Western business, and here is no space for trees or flowers. But as the rural migrant will have little contact with these groups, they will not affect his way of thinking.

Therefore, it seems certain that the Djakarta pattern is extremely helpful to the harmonious integration of migrants as the difference between village and city is mostly material, little spiritual. Moreover, a relatively small part of them were farmers, and some of them came from other towns. The societies for mutual aid, money saving etc. also certainly help to bring about a feeling of belonging which may be looked for in vain in other cities. It is probably a typical Javanese characteristic, as it was found that a number of such societies had also been formed in Makassar where their purpose was that of a funeral fund, sometimes combined with dramatical performances.

Similar efforts to social cohesion are reported in the Dacca study where the Prayer Committees seem to exercice a strong social control, whereas in Bangkok only informal groups seem to exist. Nevertheless, such groups are extremely important, and the individual can rely upon his group, may borrow money without interest and find, in general, support in the

/ struggle

struggle for life. Such groups are not mentioned in the Bombay report, but it stresses the importance of the villager's first contact man in the city. Both studies emphasize the need for expenditure on tobacco, tea, drinks and recreation as a means to overcome strains. One of the samlor drivers in Bangkok remarks that he does not have all this when he is back home, but does not seem to miss it very much. One might believe that this typical "city consumption" is connected with a certain lack of steadiness in social relationship.

The less the social cohesion is, the more easily the individual is induced to doing things which he would not have done in his normal social surroundings. However, this aspect of urbanization will be discussed later.

When we discussed some forms of self-help and social cohesion, it was already pointed out that this seemed to be most strongly developed in Djakarta. It is understandable, therefore, that Mr Heeren's paper also most clearly points to typical features of city organizations which have little to do with the officially elected municipal council. The neighbourhood organization covering a part of a kampong was always useful to watch against thieves and fire, and it provided a certain unit which facilitated the general administration. However, it could not easily be called a unit of self-government. But it is interesting to note that membership of this organization has now become compulsory and that it also serves as an intermediary between the lurah, the lowest city official, and the population. No such forms of city organization are mentioned in respect of the other cities here discussed, although they might well exist.

As regards the migrants from the higher social strata, it was remarked that their situation was really different. In the first place the white collar worker who finds no suitable place in the village will not experience the same hospitality in the city as the uneducated labourer will

/ receive.

receive. For him the city is more like the Western type: he does not know the man of the flat next doors, and he does not make an effort to get acquainted. But once he is established in the city it may affect him more profoundly. He will more intensively feel the impact of the city as the meeting place of different cultures and religions, and he will easily develop attitude of relativism. This explains the decline in interest in religion as reported by the representatives from India and Pakistan as regards the educated classes where the break-up of the joint family progresses quickly and traditions of centuries are given up by the younger generation. But this "city influence" and its effect of "sophistication" is not very strong on the lower strata of society in Asian cities as their cross-cultural contacts are very limited.

However, the city also brings about new movements which may well have a religious character, as they may also be of a general cultural nature. The revival of Buddhism in Japanese cities can be quoted in this context. This creative element in city life - although it is not always certain whether it is a new fashion or a serious cultural renewal - should always be remembered, even if one has to admit that the city is also the only place where mob rule and dictatorship can develop. As it was put by one of the participants, the city attracts both the best and the worst in the country; there is little place in the village for either the big cheater or the great genius.

However, the migrants to cities in Asia generally are neither cheaters nor geniuses. Moreover, they are only seldom attracted to the city, although it may happen, as was reported from Thailand, that demobilized soldiers prefer town life whose amenities they have learnt to prefer to the arduous tasks of the farmer. But the large majority of the migrants are pushed to the city by poverty in the village, lack of land, or debts. They do not go to the city because they think it an attractive place.

/ In conclusion

In conclusion we might say that, although the strain on the individual labourer who comes alone from the countryside to the city is certainly heavy, there are either informal groups or more or less institutionalized organizations where he can find the social connections which can replace the organic social structure of his village. It is not probable that the factory worker will have intensive contacts with the more sophisticated, Westernized part of the population, and his beliefs and religious thinking will therefore mostly not change fundamentally. It is practically certain that his first contact in the city will be a kinsman or some fellow villager who will make it easier for him to find his way in the city. After the first overwhelming impressions of city life and factory noise he may find out that not everything and everybody in hostile, although it will take him a long time to feel at home. However, individual experience will vary greatly, and the cities have each their special features which makes it hard to draw general conclusions. But it is certain that very much will depend on the question whether or not he succeeds in securing a regular income, far more than in the village.